

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE UPDATE

December 9, 2002

The Bio-Rad ELISA test that had been previously approved for CWD testing for mule deer has been approved for use on whitetail deer and elk also. The Center for Veterinary Biologics approved this additional use of the test last week. The product has been approved for testing of retropharyngeal lymph nodes of all three species, for surveillance purposes. Distribution and use of this product in the United States is under the supervision or control of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services. Distribution in each state is limited to authorized recipients designated by proper state officials, under such additional conditions as these authorities may require.

Two additional captive elk facilities in Minnesota have been guarantied and the animals residing there will be destroyed and tested for CWD. This is the result of trace backs to these facilities from the one elk in Minnesota that tested positive for CWD. The animals on the two additional farms will be destroyed within the next two weeks and the owners compensated for their loss by USDA.

A group of elk breeders in Saskatchewan have filed a class action law suit against the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food of the Canadian Government stating that the government was negligent and remiss in permitting the import of captive cervids into the country that were infected with CWD and/or bovine TB. The claim is that it was the government's responsibility to protect the producers from such disease and they knowingly permitted the importation of diseased animals. They are asking for unspecified compensation for the loss of their cervids through the CWD control program and loss of livelihood.

The rifle season in Wisconsin resulted in approximately 33,000 deer being collected for CWD testing. Although not the 50,000 hoped for, the DNR has stated that this will give them a good idea of the presence and prevalence of CWD in that state. Deer license sales in Wisconsin were down by 10% by the end of the season, a lot better than the 33% just prior to the season.

The National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in Shephardstown, West Virginia has been tasked with the development of a training module for CWD. The module will include basic disease ecology, management, surveillance, testing and research reports. The NCTC is working with DOI, USDA and the states in the development of this module. Target date for completion is March of 2003.

The Japanese Agricultural Ministry is set to check all deer and other cervid animal populations raised on farms in Japan if any animal in the country dies of chronic wasting disease (CWD). The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has been stepping up measures to cope with CWD since an elk imported into South Korea from Canada was confirmed as infected with the disease in July of last Year. Ministry officials noted that CWD had not been confirmed in Japan yet.

The Colorado Division of Wildlife continues to detect CWD outside the established endemic area of northeast Colorado. The latest reports include the detection of CWD in 7 mule deer from five new game management units (11, 211, 181, 28, 161). Five were bucks and two does. Additionally, they recently announced the finding of CWD in unit 4. The disease has now been confirmed in Colorado in several locations on the west slope of the Rocky Mountains, including northwest of Grand Junction and south of Dinosaur National Monument.

A road kill deer picked up within the city limits of Rapid City, South Dakota has tested positive for CWD. The animal was a 2 ½ year old white tail buck. South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks will move forward with more testing within Rapid City in the next few weeks to determine the prevalence of the disease in that area. This is the second positive free-roaming deer from South Dakota, the first being found last year near the Nebraska border. Additionally, one free-roaming elk from Wind Cave National Parks has tested positive for the disease.

Governor Johanns of Nebraska has approved regulations prohibiting the private ownership and importation of mule deer in Nebraska. This is in addition to the long-standing ban on the private ownership and importation of white-tail deer. The five captive facilities in the state, which currently have mule deer, are grandfathered in, however, they cannot add to the animals on their property except through natural reproduction within the fenced facility. Additionally, the animals currently held in captivity must be held on the current licensed property only or on property that is properly licensed immediately adjacent to that property. Captive mule or white-tail deer and their progeny cannot be released into the wild under the new regulations.